DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 023 756 UD 006 582

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One Man's Answers to the Educational Problems of a City.

Pub Date 68

Note-25p., Speech given at the first annual tri-chapter meeting of area Kappans (Springfield, Mass., April 2, 1968).

EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.35

Descriptors-Boards of Education, College School Cooperation, Community Involvement, Community Schools, *Educational Change, Educational Finance, *Educational Policy, Individual Instruction, Regional Cooperation, Resource Centers, School Construction, School Redistricting, State Action, Teacher Education, Work Study Programs

Identifiers-Connecticut, Hartford, METRO, Metropolitan Effort Toward Regional Opportunity, University of Hartford

In this speech the Superintendent of the Hartford Public Schools proposes some solutions to the problems of urban schooling. He feels that city boards of education should be fiscally independent of municipal governments and that the state should be responsible for organizing school districts to insure integrated education. One of his proposals is for the redistricting of the Hartford schools into semi-autonomous units directed by a district board made up of representatives of the community, professionals, and members of the central board. To improve teacher performance, he outlines a program in which future teachers would work in the schools from the time they enter a teachers college until the time they receive their masters degree; and to make education more relevant to the needs of disadvantaged students, he encourages the development of work-study programs. Hartford now has plans to construct several new schools at all levels which will allow for individual instruction. It is also part of a regional network established to facilitate greater dissemination of educational research. (EF).

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ONE MAN'S ANSWERS TO THE EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS OF A CITY

by

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ED023756
UD 006 582

The text of a speech given at the first annual tri-chapter meeting of area Kappans at Springfield, Massachusetts, April 2, 1968. The meeting was jointly sponsored by the University of Connecticut, University of Massachusetts, and Hartford chapters of Phi Delta Kappa.

Hartford really represents the typical American city in microcosm. While it is a small city in land area (18 square miles) and in population (162,000), it has all of the problems common to every major city in this country. We have a sizeable section designated as a "Disadvantaged Area", which is a polite term for "Negro Ghetto". We are surrounded by a "White Collar" of relatively wealthy suburbs. Thus, it is possible that some of my ideas of ways in which we can improve education in Hartford may prove useful in other cities as well. I am happy to share them for what they may be worth.

The basic, overriding problem we face in the Hartford Schools, and in most cities, is that of providing a program of quality integrated education -- and it is my contention that unless our youngsters have an integrated educational program, they will not have a quality educational program. And may I remind you that the suburban child, too, deserves a quality integrated education if he is to be realistically prepared to live in a multi-racial world. Yet the greatest resistance to integration in all phases of American life comes from the suburban areas. And before they recognize their need for a quality integrated education...will it be too late?

In Hartford, a very simple numerical fact makes it difficult for us to provide an integrated experience, at least in ratio proportionate to the national racial mix. In Hartford, our school enrollment is 44.5% Negro, 44.5% White and 11.0% Puerto Rican. A large number of the Negroes and Puerto Ricans live in one general area of the city, which further compounds the problem of integrating the educational experience of our Hartford children.

Underlying this all-pervasive basic problem are a number of sub problems, and it is to these that I would like to address my remarks, since I believe the key to solving the major problem lies in some of the solutions I see for these sub problems.

Hartford has been no different from other cities, both larger and smaller, in its employment of what I call "Mass Education" or maybe "Mess" education. We have some fairly large schools - seven of our elementary schools have enrollments of over 1,000 and two of these have over 1600 pupils each. Either is larger than over 60% of the school systems in Connecticut. One of our three high schools, the Hartford Public High, has over 3200 students in grades 9-12.

Not only do we house pupils in large numbers, we also have tended to teach them in a fairly traditional fashion using group techniques such as lecture, demonstration, films and the like. But things must change, and are changing in Hartford. We've recognized that we must do more to personalize instruction, to recognize each child's individual needs and to find more effective ways of meeting these needs. This has been reflected even in our building program.

Six new schools are on the drawing boards as a result of a 45 million dollar bond issue voted by Hartford citizens in 1966. In these two elementary schools, three middle schools and one high school we are incorporating as much flexibility as possible for modern educational programs, with the emphasis on individualized instruction. The high school and middle schools, although built for 2600 and for 1600 pupils respectively, will be designed and organized to operate in smaller units or "houses", which will allow students to know some teachers well and all teachers to know some pupils well. An exciting concept built into the elementary schools is the "MIA", or multi-instructional area.

This is a large room, tailored to accommodate a variety of individualized techniques, possibly in a nongraded team-teaching situation. Each MIA is sized for 100 pupils and for more than the usual four teachers. There will be more adults than usual, including a number of professional aides. Each MIA will be carpeted and equipped with both "Wet" and "Dry" carrels, a complete range of electronic equipment, a stage, a mezzanine, studio, and "tote trays" for the students' home base.

We are continuing to explore more and different techniques for personalizing instruction. The I.P.I. program, which originated in the Pittsburgh area, and multiple individualized programs of many kinds are all being adapted to our needs. With the assistance of Dr. Abraham Fischler of Nova University, some of our staff have written and are continuing to develop exciting learning activity packages which are used by students on a completely independent study basis. We are convinced of the value of the "talking typewriter" as a programmed learning device and are seeking foundation support for an installation to supplement our intensive reading program. This reading program, incidentally, was one of two from Hartford selected by the U.S. Office of Education as being among the ten better programs nationally in the improvement of educational opportunities for disadvantaged children. The other Hartford selection was Project Concern, our cooperative program for busing disadvantaged youngsters to suburban schools.

A problem related to mass education and the need for increased personalization of instruction is the necessity for reorganizing the city school system into a more manageable form. For Hartford, I have proposed that eventually

the city be redistricted into three semi-autonomous school districts.

Each of the three districts would be composed of a high school, middle schools, and feeder elementary schools, including programs for 2-3-4 and 5 year olds. Each district would be approximately equal in enrollment, racial mix and resources, and would have its own budget. Each would be administered by an associate superintendent who would be responsible for the educational program, budget development, employing, evaluating, promoting and dismissing personnel -- in other words, a superintendency in miniature - if a 10,000-12,000 pupil school system with a 10 million dollar budget and a school plant valued at 40 to 50 million dollars can be called "miniature".

For each of the three districts I envision a district school board, operating under rules and regulations developed and administered by the regular city school board. The district board may consist of 4 or 5 representatives of the community, 2 or 3 professional staff members (perhaps 1 elementary teacher, 1 secondary teacher, 1 administrator), 1 or 2 representatives from cooperating colleges or universities, plus a member of the regular city school board.

With such a board involved in the district policy-making process, members of the community and members of the teaching profession would, contrary to their present adversary roles, become a part of the educational decision-making process. This is, I am convinced, essential to the survival of American public education.

Each of these districts, though comprehensive in nature, may well have a specialty, particularly at the secondary level. For example, we are planning a University Educational Park for the Northwest district which will place an elementary school, a middle school and a high school on a site immediately

adjacent to the University of Hartford. The University is committed to working cooperatively with the Hartford Public Schools in the planning of the educational program for this complex and will use it as the training ground to prepare teachers for urban schools. Faculty and facilities of the University of Hartford will be available to our schools to meet the special needs of Hartford children. It would be possible for a gifted young musician or artist in the University Educational Park's high school to have advanced instruction at the University. The District's specialization, because of the University's influence, will probably be in the creative and performing arts.

Similar cooperative relationships with a University or a consortium of colleges and universities are planned for the central and southeast districts. One may possibly specialize in science and technology while the other may lean toward the humanities and the classics.

This should foster some healthy competition among the districts, since students will be offered some alternative choices as to which district's program most closely meets their needs. For the first time, educators will be forced to develop educational patterns which are truly relevant to student needs, or they won't have any students to work with. This could really hurt, since under this system of semi-autonomous districts, the budget dollar will follow the child to the district of his choice.

As a result of this kind of reorganization, coupled with vital school-university planning and cooperation, we will be able to provide some exciting educational opportunities which will also prove interesting to suburban youngsters and their parents. And remember, at the point at which the suburbs feel the city

has something better to offer, regional cooperation in education will really begin to thrive.

While I'm convinced that fiscal autonomy for school boards is a must (and I'll elaborate on this later) and while, in general, local autonomy in most New England communities in the past has been a good thing, school district lines have become quite static and; to many, a sacred cow, and school finance, relying as it does so heavily on the property tax, will soon become impossible. I fully expect that the Supreme Court will soon rule that, since education is a function of the State, it is the responsibility of the State to reorganize school districts in such fashion as to assure quality integrated education for all children.

The limitations of the property tax as a source of financing will give way to the broader taxes available to the State. This would allow the State to move more rapidly (and I believe it should) to overcome selfish local interest and foster quality integrated educational experiences.

There are a number of "straws in the wind" that indicate stronger State and Federal involvement in local education. The Skelly-Wright case in Washington, D.C. is one - more recently we've seen the Detroit School Board file suit against the State of Michigan for funds to operate Detroit's schools on the grounds that education is a State function and that Detroit children don't have educational opportunities equal to other children in the State.

I believe the time has come for the Federal Government to cease its coy talk of being a "junior partner" in education and become an equal partner. It is absolutely necessary to our survival as a nation to protect the national educational interests. This truism does not require amplification.

We have taken some minor but significant steps in the Hartford area toward regional cooperation. In addition to Project Concern we have seen the growth of "METRO" - The Metropolitan Effort Toward Regional Opportunity - formed in 1966, involving 28 communities, with the goal of translating recent educational research findings into practical classroom procedures, methods and materials. Metro has established a multi-media resource center serving the 28-town area and has been active in the field of educational information dissemination. A most significant move was taken recently when Metro merged with the capitol region education council, a regional organization of School Board members.

I see nothing but good for Hartford the City, and Hartford the region, in the creation of many cooperative relationships. In this way, we can at least hope to break the divisive pattern that is building a socio-economic "Berlin Wall" around the city, a wall which, if it is allowed to stand, will be smashed by a violence unsurpassed in this country's history. As one educator, I intend to try to breach this wall before it is shattered by revolution.

The dream of quality integrated education for the City's children will never become a reality if we don't take some pretty drastic steps to improve the preparation of teachers for urban schools. Public education may just have to move in the direction of taking over control of institutions of teacher education. So far, all we've done is complain about the product, and this complaining seems, nationally, to have fallen on deaf ears.

When you buy a car, you get a five year guarantee. When a school system employs a graduate of a teacher training institution, there is no such guarantee. In point of fact, it is 19th Century capitalism at its worst... "Caveat Emptor"... let the buyer beware! I contend that teacher training institutions are

going to have to certify their products. This will take the state out of the business of teacher certification. They, that is the teacher training institution, must guarantee the product - and take it back if it doesn't work...can't teach!

There is clearcut evidence in the schools of every city in this country that teachers are not being trained adequately and in sufficient numbers to meet urban problems. Having worked in the suburbs for many years, I might add that they aren't even being trained to meet suburban problems.

This may be due in part to poor placement or to poor policies of the employing school system. It may also be due to a fairly low standard, nationwide, for the admission of candidates to teacher training programs. I wouldn't say that most colleges are highly selective when it comes to teacher education candidates.

Unfortunately, once he is accepted for a teacher education program, the teacher-to-be faces another hazard. Today's teachers of teachers, in all too many instances, are teaching "favorite" courses which may or may not be relevant to education in the 1960's and the 1970's. Many are not.

As for preparing teachers to work in city schools, it is safe to say that most professors wouldn't know how to go about it - they've never even been in a city school. The "Groves of Academe" are cleaner and neater, and the suburban school is much more like them.

Perhaps it is too drastic to suggest that schools of education be taken over by public education, but we in Hartford are taking the initiative in at least moving toward an interim position. Most public schools have found it

necessary to assume major responsibility for the in-service education of teachers. And like others the Hartford Public Schools have hours, yes days, of professional time, and thousands of dollars of local, State and Federal funds, invested in a variety of programs of in-service education. Let's look at the under graduate level.

I suggest that, in Hartford, we must develop a center, with offices, seminar rooms, dormitory and eating facilities, to house teacher trainees and their professors, putting them at the heart of the urban educational scene. We are developing a pattern of teacher education with one university, whereby every prospective teacher will, from the day he enters as a freshman until he receives his Masters in education, be increasingly involved in the work of the city's schools. During the first year of his undergraduate program, he will, of course, spend the greatest percentage of his time in liberal arts studies. However, he will start right out in a classroom as an observer and begin working with community groups, getting to know the community around his school. As he moves along, his time and quality of experience in the city school classroom will gradually increase - through such stages as observer, observer-learner, clerical aide, technical aide, teacher aide, student teacher, intern, all under the direction of a skilled teacher, until his final year, when he will spend at least 50% of his time in a classroom as a "junior partner" in a cooperating team of teachers.

The city center for living and learning, for eating and sleeping, will also serve several other vital functions. Colleges should maintain close relationships with their graduates, but generally don't. This center will be an excellent point of contact for area graduates. It can afford an unparalleled opportunity for faculty members to get into the city and learn about its schools and the overall community firsthand. In fact, it can provide a central point

for a wide variety of urban studies, particularly those relating to education.

With such a center, and with the kind of program outlined, we should be able to make teacher education relevant to the kind of experience the student will face when he takes his first full-time teaching position in the city. If we do this, hopefully we will also have taken a significant step toward solving the problem of making school work relevant to the needs of our elementary and secondary school pupils. This is an area of major concern right now.

Our most recent statistics show that only 1.4% of the 1967 graduates of our 3 high schools are unemployed, and this is most encouraging. However, we have a high school drop-out rate of about 9%. This amounts to about 560 students, and of these only 200, or 36% are working full time. Certainly we need to do more to make school experiences relevant to the needs of many youngsters who are now dropping out because, as far as they are concerned, the school has nothing to offer them.

We aren't going to solve this problem merely by upgrading the quality of our staff, although that is a critical need. We've already instituted some programs which should help. The most notable of these is our work-study program, which provides practical paid work experience, for part of each school day, which is directly related to the student's program of studies. The work experience, under capable supervision, is evaluated and granted credit toward graduation, along with successful completion of the academic program. We have had wonderful cooperation from local business and industrial concerns in providing opportunities for a wide variety of work situations - retailing, wholesaling, food service, automotive maintenance, electrical repair work, and the like.

Next fall we will inaugurate a cadet training program in protective science to train young men (and perhaps a few young women) for police and fire protection work.

In all of these training programs we must and will build in what I call a "Slot Opener". Although most of us don't like to admit it, in order to make education manageable we prepare students for limited "slots" in the socio-economic structure. Sometimes, however, it becomes apparent that one is in the wrong "slot", or, with increasing automation and changing technology, one's "slot" may just become obsolete and disappear.

A "Slot-Opener" allows for and corrects such a situation. It consists, in part, of a particular state of mind which calls for flexibility, adaptability and the understanding that change, in work as in any other aspect of life, is the only constant.

Hence the organizational structure and pattern of education, and of work training, must be such that it permits an individual either to advance in the area in which he is working or to return to the educational stream for further general preparation for other kinds of work.

Let's apply this specifically to the protective science program I just mentioned. This is a program designed for young people who may wish to explore the work opportunities in this field and develop their own aptitudes and interests in this area.

At a very early stage, the student has an opportunity to examine specific problems related to police science and fire science. In a sense he begins to major in one area or the other. He may be exposed to law, chemistry, communication systems, psychology, traffic control, and to specific techniques relating to the work of the firefighter or the policeman. In the course of this,

the student soon learns not only the glamorous and exciting aspects of these occupations, but also the boring routines and just plain "dog work" that is involved. Some who were initially interested in firefighting may discover an aptitude for police work and vice versa. Some will find themselves well satisfied with their current course of action. Others may well decide that this type of work is not their cup of tea.

For those who wish to change, we must provide easy changeover points leading from one program to the other or back to the general educational stream, and with no loss of status or credit! If we have been successful in developing a flexible and adaptable mind-set, a youngster can make such changes with reasonable equanimity. If, in addition, we have developed the educational program to permit these alternate choices, then our "slot-opener" is working, and individuality in learning is being encouraged.

If we can develop and expand these kinds of programs, and build in the kind of flexibility or "slot-opener" a young person needs to work successfully, I believe we'll begin to see a sharp reduction in our drop-out rate. We've already demonstrated that if we can keep students in school, their chances for employment are dramatically increased.

As I commented earlier, another major obstacle in the path toward quality integrated education in Hartford is the lack of fiscal autonomy for its Board of Education. I know that many experts in municipal government argue that education should be a part of municipal government, so that all elements of the city may be effectively coordinated. As a practicing Superintendent, I disagree emphatically for some very practical and realistic reasons.

First of all, legally, education is a function of the State and school board members are by statute state officers with local jurisdiction. The purpose of the legislature in determining the status of school board members was to achieve the goal of providing, in the interest of the State, a sound education for the children in each of the communities of the State. This purpose is frustrated when school board members must secure appropriations from other bodies who have the final say in financial matters. In effect, the Board of Education is without power to conduct the State's educational business as it sees fit.

It is essential for the Board of Education to have fiscal authority if, as I believe, the people of the community are to have an opportunity to help decide on the quality of local education. The community elects members to the Board of Education for the purpose of determining educational policies. Members of the School Board spend time and thought every day of the year and make a great effort to acquire an intimate knowledge of the conditions in the schools. On the other hand, members of the Board of Finance and similar bodies are elected on the basis of their competence in general governmental operations. They are expected to know--and do know--a great deal about utilities, police service, fire protection, public works, building regulations, and zoning. Their interests are bound to follow those areas of primary responsibility. They are not concerned with educational philosophy or the operations of the schools. They do not follow school problems and developments from day to day. Interest and competence in educational matters is not one of the qualifications required of city councils and except during budget

times they lack opportunity to study school problems. Even then, their interest is financial not educational. The finance authorities stand between the responsible school board and its ability to put its reasonable plans into effect.

The problems of education today are too important and have too much impact on the future of our society to permit the conservative political authorities to play games and build in "blocks" to assure inaction. In some communities, there are 5 or 6 reviews made by different bodies, resulting in "half baked" budget decisions.

The present system does not provide desirable "checks and balances". It invariably results in budget reductions, since the appropriating body generally sees its role as being that of a "hatchet man". The interplay between the various authorities in working out their own ideas of the level of spending for education reduces confidence that any program can be carried out. And that lack of confidence has contributed much to the present low level of education in our cities.

Our Board of Education, and, indeed, every Board of Education needs the leverage that fiscal autonomy would provide, if education is to be put in proper perspective.

Let me explain why this leverage of fiscal autonomy is needed. When the city administration needs urban renewal credits, they will cooperate much more readily with an autonomous board in determining the location, size and nature of any schools to be built.

The need for this kind of leverage is never more evident than when a housing agency decides to build low cost homes in an area without first

considering the possible effect of such a development on school facilities, racial mix, or the neighborhood's general socio-economic composition.

Leverage is needed when a city is considering the relocation of a highway or road, particularly if it will present traffic hazards to children or split an attendance area that had been carefully planned to assure the proper number of seats in a school, or to create a desirable socio-economic or racial mix. The entire Model Cities concept, in fact, demands the kind of independence that will make the opinions and decisions of educators effective in the overall planning of any city.

Basically, the body that controls the purse strings controls the decision making. What school board will argue very strongly about the placement of a road when to do so will place acceptance of the annual school budget in jeopardy?

Someone (do you know who?) said that education is too important to be left to educators and I think he was right. I'd like to twist that around a bit. I believe that we aren't going to make a substantial impact in the community until we educators <u>stop</u> tending to education's business and start tending to <u>everybody's</u> business. We need to be involved in and concerned about city govenment, about business practices, especially those relating to employment and the sale of homes, about social problems, about economics -- and in point of fact about all the aspects of the city. Only in this way can we begin to know the people and understand the forces that are shaping today's society. Only in this way can we do something about these problems.

Let me drop this topic and move on to another. We need greater and more effective involvement of citizens in the work of our schools. I'm sure you caught the hint of this when I mentioned citizen participation in the three-district boards. That, however, is not the widespread involvement I believe we need to encourage. How do we do this, and still guarantee a quality integrated education?

In Hartford, we've begun to establish citizen advisory councils for each of our 27 schools. Aided and abetted by the Principal, the council includes not just parents, but local merchants, nuns, policemen, and, in one school, several witch doctors and a Priest.

Does this involvement really pay off? Let me read you a letter.

We were puzzled by the phraseology when we first read it. Then we realized it had probably been written in English by a Puerto Rican interpreter just as the author dictated it in Spanish. Hence there are some charmingly intricate passages. Nevertheless, the sincerity of the writer's appreciation shows through.

Hon Sir:

I wait you will pardon the boldness for taking the liberty of addressing this letter.

This short phraseology that I am printing in this parchment is to express you, Honorable Sir by means of this graphollogical characteristic that, I receive a letter signed by you and dated November 17, 1968.

In the first paragraph of the letter you, Honorable Sir welcome me to be member of the Educational Council Committee of my school district.

I appreciate from the bottom of my heart and from the firmament of my soul the atmosphere of interest you have had in naming me to be a member in that important council.

I believe that the creation of this council will bring an improvement in the roads of communication between the community and the public school. The relationship between them will be more closer because all can be working together with only thing in mind making Hartford the first educative city in the United States.

I think and my humble opinion is that the substance and germ of education will reach its summit point due to the constructive ideas, principles and higher concepts of Phase Two "Building Program and School District Reorganization" by Honorable Medill Bair, Superintendent of Schools.

This program have a excellent, extraordinary, exceptional remarkable degree of quality.

Giving to you the most effusive thanks. I stay from you.

Very most Respectfully,

Angel Gonzalez

Perhaps that letter could serve as a fitting conclusion to this talk. Coming as it does from a member of a so called "minority" group, it is a reminder of many of the problems facing urban education. The occasion of its writing, however, indicates the progress we are making toward involvement of the city's people in the educational process.

There is no one simple solution to our problems, although money would be a good start. We must and will continue to explore creative and promising ways of improving urban education, with a full recognition of education's key role in the social, physical and economic rehabilitation of the city.